

Saturday



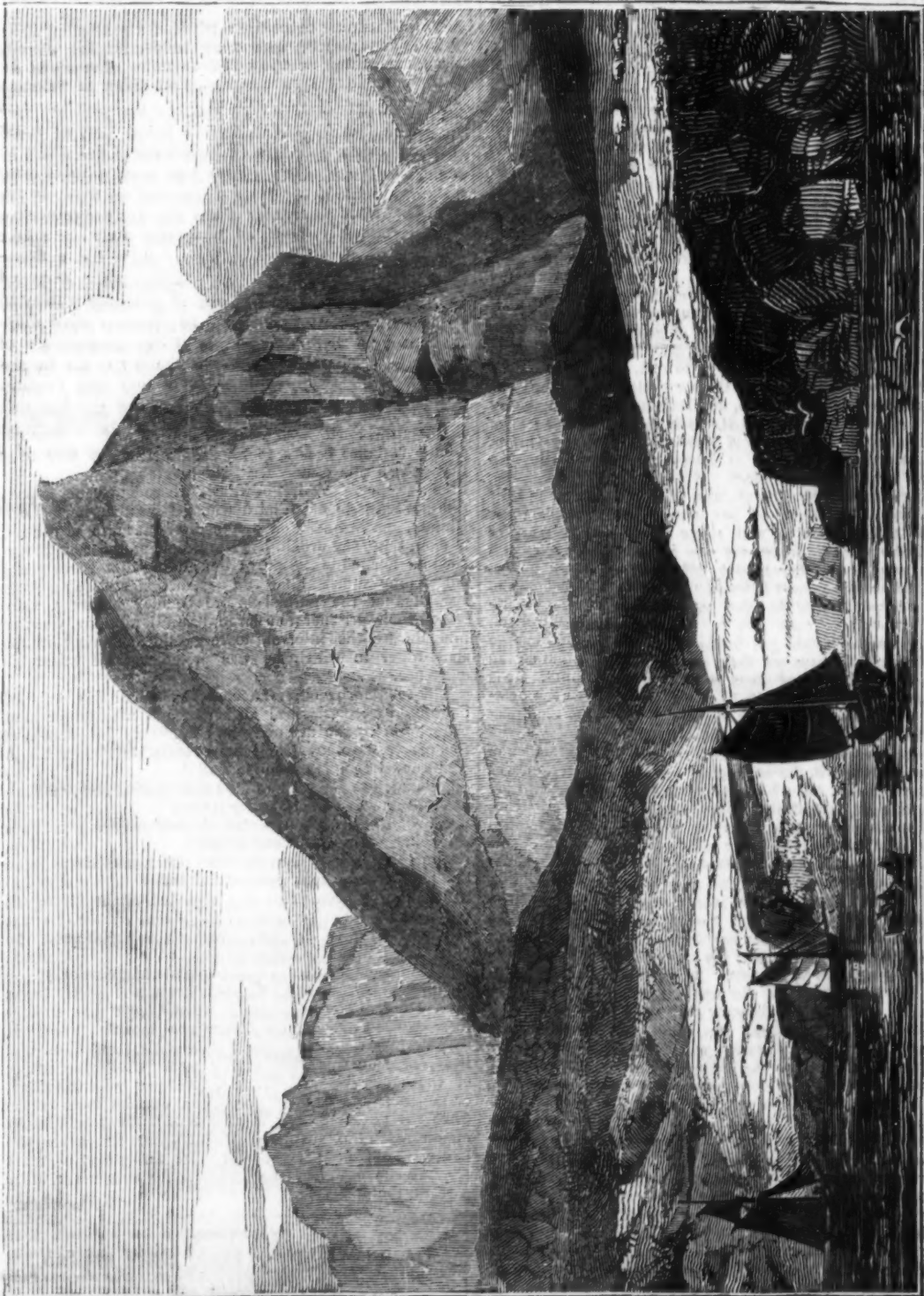
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VIEW IN LOCH SCOURIE.

SKETCHES OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND

PART THE NINTH.

LOCH BADCOL; OBSERVANCE OF SABBATH.

(A. D. 1827. Oct.)

WIND and tide prevented our reaching Loch Ardvar by water, and we returned to Scourie. The following conversation, characteristic of the people of this part of the country, passed between me and my guide, a boy, on the walk to Loch Badcol. Pausing he asked me, as the guide of yesterday had done, whether I travelled on Sunday?—and, on being interrogated as to his reason for putting this question, he replied, "Because no one will carry your bag for you; you must carry it yourself, if you travel to-morrow. You might perhaps induce some one to do it by the offer of lucre; but he would not be permitted." "Who would interfere?" "Why Mr. Gordon, or any other minister, to be sure." "How would he enforce his prohibition?" "Why by making the man who disobeyed it stand in church (i. e. do penance); and he would do quite right." The tone which the boy assumed at the conclusion of the last sentence, implied a resolute submission to the authority of his minister, and surprise at my not anticipating it.

In Sutherlandshire, especially the western part of the county, being remote, and hitherto little visited by strangers, the habits and feelings of the people retain much of their primitive simplicity, and more especially in regard to religion and to church-discipline. The authority of the Kirk is undisturbed by dissent; my guide's peremptory assertion of its right of inflicting ecclesiastical penalties for transgression affords some proof of its ascendancy. The parochial jurisdiction is often, however, rather oligarchical than monarchical; the elders and leading parishioners frequently assume the prerogative of prescribing and regulating the minister's doctrine, and calling him to rigorous account for any deviation from it: and they thus hold him in a sort of thralldom, by no means limited to mere doctrinal matters. A minister, whom I met in the south of Scotland, described to me with much feeling the annoyance to which he had been subjected by such control, during some years in which he had held a parochial charge in Sutherlandshire. This overstrained jurisdiction of the parishioners is by no means confined to this county. It is an abuse of the system of discipline adopted in the Scottish church, which assigns to laymen a share of ecclesiastical authority.

The proofs which have been offered of the prevalence of domestic worship among the Scottish peasantry, proves that Burns's exquisite picture in his "Cottar's Saturday Night," is not a poetical fiction, but drawn from living reality. The comparative neglect of this admirable practice among the upper classes, both in Scotland and England, now happily much diminishing, has yet spread but little its baneful influence among the lower, in Scotland. The religion of their forefathers was riveted to their bosoms by persecution, as well as by the tenacious attachment to hereditary creeds and practices which characterizes these people. It is to be regretted that the somewhat diminished strictness, in regard to the Sabbath, now complained of in these regions, is partly attributed to the example of the English sheep-farmers, who had been educated in a different school; and also to the occasional desecration of the sacred day by English travellers, in not observing it as a day of rest. The rigid questioning of my guides, as to my practice on this head, was caused by the soreness produced in their minds by a recent instance of such reprehensible conduct. Our countrymen, who vindicate Sunday-travelling on the Continent, by pleading the propriety of conforming to the customs of the countries which they visit, should, for consistency's sake, abstain from it in Scotland.

I do not pretend to justify the rigorous mode of observing the Sabbath occasionally adopted in Scotland, or the means sometimes resorted to for enforcing it. It would be difficult to comprehend by what sanction the more strict among the people vindicate their prohibition of a walk on Sunday, except to church; nay, even forbid a man a stroll in his own garden, on that day. The Sabbath day's journey, im-

plied in the exception admitted, is, however, a term of very various signification in different parts of Scotland; indicating, in the Lowlands, usually a moderate walk, but in the Highlands and Islands, sometimes more than a day's journey, or voyage not always practicable. A minister condemned in strong terms the conduct of a gentleman whom I had just visited, in not regularly attending church, though separated from it by fifteen miles of sea. So far is the prohibitory system carried, that although "cleanliness" has been pronounced in holy writ to be "next to godliness," the act of shaving on Sunday morning is offensive in some parts of Scotland. A clergyman assured me that rather than excite displeasure by the performance of such an operation on Sunday, he accomplished it late on Saturday evening.

The national observance of any religious rite or custom, though eminently beneficial, and conducive in the best sense of the word to the glory of a country, is necessarily not without its attendant disadvantage. Fashion will induce some to comply, from formality, hypocrisy, or superstition; and the Scotch, like their brethren of other nations and creeds, are not exempt from the charge of forgetting, in their attention to the ceremonial, a due regard to the moral obligations of the law ordaining the observance of the Sabbath. Though they very properly refuse labour on Sunday, even when tempted to it by ample inducements, they are not always so scrupulous about indulging in idleness, or sometimes drinking.

One instance occurs to my recollection, of a breach of that golden rule of holy writ, which enjoins "mercy rather than sacrifice." A large whale, whose jaw-bone adorns the garden-gate of a laird whom I visited, near Loch Linnhe, got stranded on the shore of that arm of the sea late on Saturday evening. The people of the neighbourhood all flocked to the prey; but finding that there would not be time sufficient for the destruction and subsequent spoliation of the animal before Sunday morning, they lashed their prisoner to a large tree till Monday, viewing him, during the interval, tossing and bellowing in the shoal-water in which he was prolonging his miserable existence.

The compulsory observance of the Sabbath day, enforced not only by ecclesiastical authority, and national or local usage, but by the arbitrary and summary jurisdiction of the people, is a practice more peculiar to Scotland. A well-known Ben Nevis guide had been persuaded by two Englishmen to carry a bag for them to Inverness, on Sunday: as he was passing through Glen Urquhart, while the *preaching-folk*, as persons attending church are sometimes called in Scotland, and not from disrespect, were assembling, he was seized, and carried also thither, and heard some pointed denunciations against Sabbath-breaking, the minister having been previously apprized of the stranger's presence, and the occasion of it. From church, he was conveyed to the residence of a respectable parishioner, who entertained him very hospitably, and at midnight returned him his bag, and suffered him to pursue his journey.

Opposite extremes partly counteract and partly beget each other. The occasionally extravagant and unduly rigorous observance of the Sabbath in Scotland, produces, by affording something like a pretext for, remissness and irreverence on this head among some persons, especially of the upper classes, whose intercourse with England, or superiority to popular prejudices, enables them to perceive the errors of their countrymen, without sufficiently appreciating the virtues of which these errors are the abuse. To Scotland, whatever these errors may be, must certainly be assigned the pre-eminence over every other part of the kingdom, perhaps of the world, in the due adherence to the spirit as well as the letter of the sacred injunctions respecting the observance of the Sabbath. The justice of this remark may be verified by any one who chances to pass Sunday in a large town in Scotland. The streets, empty and deserted during the early hours of morning, are suddenly, as the hour of divine service approaches, thronged with vast multitudes, hastening in

perfect stillness, obviously bent on the solemn purpose for which they are congregating, to their respective places of worship. As the churches fill, the town assumes once more the appearance of a city of the dead; and after the conclusion of public worship, the people return to their homes as decorously as on their repairing to the celebration of it. In the evening, the suburbs and fields in the neighbourhood may be seen crowded with orderly groups, enjoying the recreation which fresh air and the contemplation of nature afford; and not endeavouring to banish, by gregarious dissipation, the seriousness produced by the solemnity of which they had partaken. Such has been Scotland; may she long bear engraven on her front, in this respect, though in others its impress may be fast wearing away, the stamp of the hallowed signet of antiquity.

LOCH SCOURIE; CHANGE OF MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

TAKING a boat at Loch Badcol, I proceeded along the coast to Loch Scourie. The scenery of this arm of the sea is grand, especially at its upper part, which I, unfortunately, did not see. The house of a gentleman, formerly in the army, who rents one of the Marquis of Stafford's sheep-farms, near Loch Ardvar, afforded me a very comfortable abode during Sunday. The people of this neighbourhood have suffered from the unaccountable caprice of the herrings, which formerly frequented Loch Scourie, giving employment, twenty years ago, sometimes to two hundred fishing-vessels, and often to sixty or seventy since that period. But those fish have since entirely forsaken this part of the coast. The lobsters which abound here are carried off by the Orkney-men, who take them in boats of fourteen feet keel, and sell them to the smacks. Habit is a main-spring of enterprise. Those islanders who do not attempt to imitate and share the profits of strangers in their own deep-sea fishery, will explore in boats the western coast of Scotland, and in turn rob the more indolent natives of their valuable staple. The coast of Pembrokeshire affords a similar instance to those which have been mentioned, of the natives thus surrendering their fishery to strangers, the Brixham trawlers*.

A good cheese, of excellent quality, is produced here, by an intermixture of the milk of the sheep, the goat, and the cow. The old habits and superstitions of the people are fast on the wane; the fiddler has displaced the piper, and little vestige of the second sight can be traced. My host remembers one old man who professed it; he would occasionally make a practice of starting up when on a visit in a cottage, and declaring that he beheld the fearful vision. But his credit gradually declined, as it was discovered that his prognostications of good or evil fortune, were regulated by the treatment of his hosts.

Lord Stafford's land is leased in large farms, for nineteen and twenty-one years, and to cottars for seven years, or at will. The tenants of the large farms are chiefly from Northumberland and the Lowlands of Scotland. The practice adopted by these strangers, of taking a *morning*, i. e., early breakfast, at six o'clock, consisting of milk and porridge, as a prelude to a more substantial meal at nine, astonishes the Highlander, who is satisfied with a "dram." The Englishman carries with him, wherever he goes, his sturdy appetite for substantial food.

Innovation is rapidly spreading to the remotest extremities of Scotland. The advantages resulting from the revolution of habits and manners, are not without their concomitant evils. But the natives, naturally enough disposed to lament that "old times are changed, old manners gone," are too ready to exaggerate the latter. Among these, is enumerated the alleged decline of military spirit; but this has resulted from the single circumstance that military service is very little required in time of peace. The old Highland system had undergone its principal change before the commencement of the last war, and yet never was the martial spirit of the Scotch, whether Lowlander or Highlander, more distinguished than during its continuance: though educated in a different school, and inheriting different habits, the soldiers of these different

tribes might fairly assert an equal claim to the laurels which they won:

....In each well-foughten field,
We kept together in our chivalry.

The mountaineer is not now compelled to make his Winter's bed on the heath, and to dip his plaid in water, that when frozen, it may shield him from the external cold, and to brave with bare knees the alterations of climate, or to be ready at the whistle of a leader, or the challenge of an enemy, to grasp his claymore, or his dagger, and to dyo his fields or his board with blood. But he may still, though following in an orderly and quiet manner, the pursuits of industry, hold himself in readiness to defend his country at the call of danger, and submit to all the rules of military discipline: and there can be little doubt that the habits of a well-regulated community are better calculated to increase the physical strength, and moral energy of a people, and to fit them for the exigencies of regular war, than the lawless customs of tribes subject only to their own laws, however favourable these may be to sudden and desperate efforts. Peace is apt to produce effeminacy, and it ought to be counteracted by the whole tendency of education; but this vice can never unnerve the mountaineers, to whom privation, fatigue, and danger, are necessarily habitual from their childhood.

Antiquity has, however, found champions resolved to make a last stand in its defence. Sir Walter Scott did not probably foresee, when he re-peopled his native land with the mighty dead of former ages, that he should not only imbue the living generation with the spirit of their forefathers, but induce them to re-assume the garb of the Gael, which had been gradually supplanted by the monkey fashions of French tailors. The amiable and persevering enthusiasm of General Stewart of Garth has seconded the ardour of the poet.

The dress having been restored to the Highland regiments, after the use of it had been prohibited by law, and hence immortalized by their achievements in all quarters of the globe, has thus never become obsolete; and many of the Highland lairds now habitually wear it. I have found myself several times at table almost the only individual not clad in it; and once at Edinburgh, when the majority of guests appeared in it, at the table of Sir Walter Scott. The lairds sometimes encourage their tenants to imitate their example by rewards: but their success is very partial; and except at a festival, or fair, the kilt is rarely, if ever, seen, in the Northern Highlands. The Celtic Society has lent its powerful assistance to the lairds' efforts, and the muster of the clans at Edinburgh, in their respective tartans, under royal sanction, the assumption of the dress by the monarch† himself, and by Sir Walter Scott, supplied a potent stimulant to the spreading taste. The most zealous advocates for the Highland dress, are often young Englishmen who have become naturalized in Scotland, and are usually much fired by the novelty, as well as charms, of a mountain life. Nor must be forgotten a race of youthful aspirants of the same stamp,—the students of English universities,—who annually seek learned retirement, and healthy exercise, in the Scottish Highlands, and who deem it right to assume the supposed dress of the land in which they sojourn. The fashion will have its day, and then yield to the operation of the causes which have gradually produced its original decay. The splendid dress in question was adapted to a state of society entirely different from the present: to pedestrians,—before roads were made, and horses ridden,—to men compelled to bear arms in self defence, and to wear the distinguishing garb of the tribe or clan to which they belonged, and from which they derived their protection.

Nobler objects than the revival of an ancient dress have engaged the attention of the Celtic and other Highland Societies,—the preservation of the ancient language and

† George the Fourth was much censured at Glasgow for the compliment which he paid, on this occasion, to the Highlanders; and it was observed that his Majesty might as reasonably have appeared at St. James's in an old Welsh dress, as at Holyrood House in an antiquated costume of a fragment of the Scottish population. The burden of the offence was, however, laid on the shoulders of Sir Walter Scott, who, it was said, "ought to have known better;" and the Monarch was held, comparatively, irresponsible; no less than the courtly and good-humoured alderman of the city of London, who, on the same occasion, invested his portly form in the airy garb of a mountaineer. An elderly lady of ancient family, in the Highlands, on hearing me mention the observations of the worthy citizens of Glasgow, exclaimed with great emphasis, "The Lowlanders had no reason for the dissatisfaction which they expressed: they did not fight for Prince Charles; the Highlanders did! and the King knew that they would fight for him under similar circumstances."

* It has been already mentioned, that the French fishermen were content with purchasing fish of the Brixham boats, till prevented by their own custom-house officers. The French may now be seen carrying off the herrings under the cliffs of Dover, whilst the men of Deal or Dover make no effort to dispute the prize with them. The pilotage, now affording but scanty remuneration, and other employment, supplied by the shipping, may have induced the relinquishment of the fishery on the part of these people. (1835.)

music of the country, and the encouragement of manly games and exercises, which are as well calculated to promote the physical force, as the contentment and cheerfulness, of the people. Public amusements cannot be deprecated, unless when the abuse of them predominates over the advantages to be derived from them. The assemblage of the villagers at a cricket-match, and a game of foot-ball, hockey, or shinty, if not accompanied with intoxication, is as innocent as the prize-fight is degrading, or the race-course destructive of the morals both of the upper and lower classes. Scotland protests against the former of these, as beneath the dignity of a rational, and unworthy of the feelings of a humane and brave, people; and it were well for the country, if the southern practice of horse-racing had not extended to the north; but, unfortunately, it has been introduced at the great northern meeting at Inverness, and several of the neighbouring lairds ride their own horses, and undergo regular training for the purpose. The Scotch gentry need no additional incentive to spending their money.

In advertent to the stand made in Scotland on behalf of ancient customs, it would be unpardonable not to allude to the solitary attempt of one individual to recover the shadow of that authority which has been enjoyed by his ancestors. But Macdonell of Glengarry is no more; and no successor has been found to harbour the phantom of *chieftainship*, the familiar spirit of that ardent clansman's waking dreams.

ASSYNT; WALK TO ULLAPOL; HERRING FISHERY; BEN
WYVIS.

THE Kirk of Assynt is fifteen miles distant from Scourie. A parliamentary church is building for the supply of a population of 1060 persons, who are situated at a still greater distance from it. Notwithstanding the destitution of spiritual superintendence in this large and populous parish, it contains but one dissenter: the reason assigned for this circumstance here, as elsewhere, in these vast districts, which dissent has little penetrated, is that the people are too poor to defray the expense of spiritual instruction.

Medical aid is still less within reach, being sought when needed, which is seldom, on the eastern coast. As it was impossible to attend church, my host read to his family a sermon of Dr. John Erskine: he has a library consisting chiefly of religious books. We ascended a hill above this house, commanding an extensive view of the towering peaks of Coy Craig, and of the two branches of the Kyle. The sides of this hill were not long ago covered with wood.

The road to Assynt passes under the precipitous ridges of Coy Craig, and falls in at the lake side with the yet unfinished road from Bonar Bridge to Loch Inver, which will establish the hitherto irregular communication between the eastern and western coasts of Scotland. The shores and inlets of Loch Assynt, as well as the adjoining hills, are sprinkled with copse, and the fine heights of Coy Craig and Ben Ewe are striking objects from them.

The old castle of Ardvreck stands on a small rocky promontory, on the north side of the lake, once defended by cannon, which have been found buried, either by accident or design: the proprietor intends to dig them up. The keep and part of the ruined apartments still exist. This castle belonged anciently to the Macleods, who sold it to the Mackenzies of Seaforth, of whom the Sutherland family purchased it; and the Mackenzie clan are said to have been so indignant at the transfer, that they attacked and burnt it. The last of the Mackenzies was a man of gigantic stature. It was the discovery of a bone, which the Mackenzies claimed as his, that caused the battle in the churchyard of Assynt, which was related in a former part of these Sketches. Within gunshot of the castle, on the shore of the lake, stands an ancient, half-ruined mansion, containing a double set of apartments, and presenting a handsome front of two rows of windows, six in each. A furious feud once raged between the family who inhabited this mansion, and their neighbours at the castle.

The church of Assynt is at the head of the lake, and near it is the manse, where I found ample and cordial hospitality. The minister was zealously promoting education in his parish, finding great eagerness for it. In proof of this, he stated that old women might be seen at the schools learning in the same class with their daughters, and that the more learned, who were acquainted with English, were in the habit of translating passages into Gaelic, for the use of their relatives and neighbours. The minister assured me that family prayer was universal in his parish.

Dr. Ross, the minister of the neighbouring parish of

Loch Broom, the most extensive in Scotland, is considered one of the best Gaelic scholars of which the north can boast.

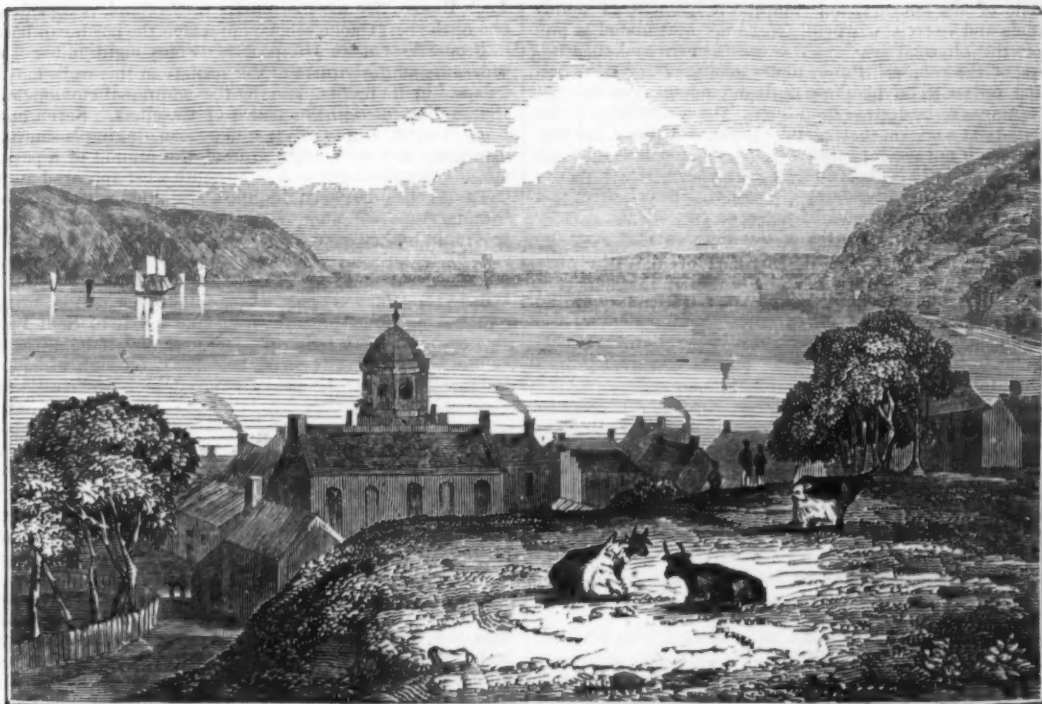
From Assynt to Ullapool is twenty-eight miles. My enlarging in description of the scenery of this walk may be excused by its merits, and by the additional circumstance that it has escaped the notice of travellers. Seven miles from Assynt, I quitted the new road, taking a southern direction; and soon enjoyed from the summit of a pass, a singularly-grand prospect. To south-west appeared a spacious lake, embosomed in hills, sprinkled with numerous islands, winding underneath the base of Coul More, a mountain broken into three peaks, the central of which is conical, and much resembles Skiddaw. Another mountain equally picturesque towers over its shoulder. As we advanced, the further part of the lake opened in all its expanse on the river, stretching to the base of Soul Vain, or the Sugar-loaf Hill, lofty, abrupt, and rounded at its summit. The dreariness of the country through which our track led us, was pleasantly relieved by a well-cultivated and well-peopled valley.

From the summit of the next pass which we reached, the noble peaks of Coul More were disclosed on the right, separated from Coul Beg, appearing further southward, by a lake over which the Sugar-loaf Hill towered in the distance, occupying a new and highly-picturesque relative position in regard to the other mountains. On our approaching Coul Beg a few miles further on, a fine cluster of mountains, called in the Gaelic language by a name signifying the Birds'-hill, came into view; between which and Coul Beg rises the Stack, a conical mountain in a line with the Sugar-loaf, to which it has a close resemblance, both in its shape, and in its grouping with the higher inland mountains. The two ranges, ranking in height with the mountains of Sky and Arran, form that complete rampart of which I surveyed a portion from the Isle of Handa, rising from the sea in the shape of a glacier, defended from its tempestuous inroads by a bold and rugged outwork. The level of the country to westward is much elevated, and very dreary. About seven miles from Ullapool, we entered an extensive green valley, sprinkled with cottages, through which a mountain-river flows to the sea, which now became visible, gemmed with islands of which Martin is the principal, backed by the bold promontory which separates the greater from the lesser Loch Broom. The cottages were wretched: none of the people spoke English. We scrambled hence up the side of a nearly precipitous ridge; following the course of a torrent which forms some fine cataracts, and descending into the valley of Strath Kenard by fording a river, gained the road, and ascended the opposite mountain, which is very steep, from whence we perceived Ullapool, a large, but compactly built village, situated on a cultivated level plain, on the bank of the greater Loch Broom.

The inn at Ullapool might pass for an old deserted manor-house, promising well from its exterior, and the size of its apartments, but indicating better days by their half-ruined state. The condition of the inn is mournfully emblematic of the generally declining state of the village. Its neat, commodious, tiled houses, are partly forsaken; and the large store-houses erected for the fishery are disused. Fishing-stations were formed with great expectations of profit by the British Fishing Company, at Ullapool, Tanera, and Loch Torridon, on the western coast. Both the latter have failed. Ullapool, though it has much declined, still carries on a trifling fishery. The cause of the unfortunate result of these speculations, has been the disappearance of the fish, which formerly frequented these bays in such vast shoals as almost to choke the sea, but now arrive seldom, and in small detachments.

The extraordinarily capricious movements of the herrings are not satisfactorily accounted for. They have been ascribed to the introduction of steam-vessels, but without reason; for Loch Fyne, whose waters are perpetually molested by paddles, abounds in herrings; whilst the bays on this coast, which steam-vessels have not disturbed, have been deserted by these fish. The disappearance of the herrings at Ullapool being contemporaneous with the erection of the village and fishing-establishment, has been by some persons attributed to the noise occasioned by the progress of the work. The occurrence of a similar phenomenon on the coast of Donegal, when the Right Hon. Burton Conyngham, assisted by a grant from the Irish parliament, formed a fishing-establishment, and laid down roads at considerable expense, being subsequent to the completion of the undertaking, has been generally explained in the same manner*; and

* Wakefield's Ireland.



CROMARTY.

it is remarkable that a corresponding result seemed to follow from the erection of fishing-establishments on the coast of Sweden, south of Gottenburg; the herrings which previously abounded in the adjacent sea, having about that time deserted it; and, according to one of the most eminent naturalists of that country, in consequence of the disturbance which they had experienced. Facts certainly bear out this mode of accounting for the phenomenon. But on the other hand, it will not explain the discontinuance of the visits of the herrings to places in which fishing-establishments have not been formed; and the circumstance of the fish having not returned to their old haunts long after the coasts have resumed their former stillness and desolation.

Although the occasional movements of these fish may be mysterious, little doubt is now ascertained respecting the general course and purpose of their migration.

Observation has proved the absurdity of that old notion which still occasionally finds its way into print, having got too great hold on the popular imagination to be at once eradicated, that the herrings absconded annually from that great supposed emporium of fish as well of men, the north, and being broken into two grand divisions, by the intervention of the Shetland Isles, invested the coasts of Great Britain, and then returned again to the cold latitudes from which they issued. It is now ascertained that these fish are migratory, only as they change their abode from deep to shallow water, for the purpose of depositing their spawn, and again to deep water when this process is terminated. It is creditable to the accuracy of observation of some of the correspondents whose reports are given in the *Statistical Survey*, that they advanced this opinion respecting the herrings at a time when the visionary theory which has been adverted to was little disputed. Their statement has been confirmed by the discoveries of naturalists, and especially the valuable testimony of Mr. Neilson, the most eminent living naturalist of Sweden, who has made the habits of the herring the object of his particular study. In prosecuting his researches respecting these fish, he enjoyed singular advantages, having been deputed by the Swedish government to survey the coast of Norway for the purpose. He has ascertained that the herrings are of distinct species in the different latitudes in which they are found, whether in the Gulf of Bothnia, in the Cattegat, or on the western coast of Norway; and as these distinct species do not intermingle, their only movements can be between deep and shallow water, according to the season.

In reference to the local movements of the herrings on

the British coast, I would venture the conjecture that, in subordination to the main purpose of spawning in shallow water, they are chiefly regulated by the direction of the prevailing wind.

The south-west wind blows in our islands during nine months of the year; and usually with little interruption during the Summer and Autumn. Now if, as it may be naturally supposed would be the case, the herrings would seek a sheltered shore for the deposition of their spawn, they would migrate in the Autumn, the period assigned to this process, to the eastern coast, and return, after it had been completed, to the deep sea from which they had issued. And this is precisely their course. They first appear off the north-west coast of Scotland in the beginning of June, proceed along the northern, and swarm on the north-eastern in July; and descending along the eastern, reach Cromarty Bay about September, and commence and continue spawning, in sheltered places, especially off Yarmouth, till the end of October. In October they reach the straits of Dover, and continue in the east part of the Channel during that and the following month, when the sea may be seen covered with their spawn, drifted probably from the eastern coast. Then pursuing a westerly direction, having fulfilled the purpose for which they resorted to the eastern coast, they reach the coast of Devon in November, accompanied by the young fry*, and finally vanish altogether off the Land's End of Cornwall in March, except some few individuals which may be occasionally caught during the whole of the year. In the interval between March and June, the period at which they are lost sight of at the south-west extremity of our island, and re-appear at the north-west, they pursue their course in deep water; and if they continue to proceed during these months at the same rate at which they advance during the remaining nine, they cannot depart far from our shores. There probably they form the complete circuit of our island; and the supposition that their movement bears reference to spawning, and is regulated by the wind, in regard to this purpose, is obvious and natural.

The descent of the herrings along the western coast of Scotland and into the Irish Channel, offers no objection to the above supposition. They resort to those bays and

* The net used off the coast of Devon is contrived so as to allow the young fish to pass unmolested. It is fastened at one end to an anchor, or a buoy, at a distance from the shore regulated by the course of the herrings; about ten feet in depth. The upper part is floated by corks; the lower kept down by leads. The mesh is adapted to the full-grown size of the herring; the fish endeavouring to pass, advances as far as the dorsal fin, when, on attempting to go back it is caught by the gills.

coasts which are sheltered from the S. W. wind, such as the Clyde and its various lochs, and migrate from the western to the eastern shore of the Isle of Man in September, the period of spawning; whilst their visits are irregular to those bays on the western coast which are exposed to the West winds.

The minor fluctuations in the progress of these fish are, doubtless, governed by the wind, as they advance and recede, still making good their way in a direction always opposite to that from which it blows. The progressive movement may also have reference to a perpetual and inexhaustible supply of food.

It is possible that the curious fact of the *pilchards* proceeding in a direction opposite to that of the herrings, those fish appearing off the coast of Cornwall in August, and moving eastward, up a part of the Channel, till November, and then disappearing altogether, may have given rise to the supposition of two divisions of herrings, as the *pilchards** differ so little from the herrings, that they might easily be supposed to be of the same species. It is remarkable that the disappearance of the *pilchards* about the coast of Devon, is exactly contemporaneous with the advance of the herrings to the same part of the Channel. The intermingling and conflicting of these approaching hosts, is obviated by the instinctive retreat of the former, not in the path of its former advance, but into deep water.

The abode of the herrings in the great deep exactly corresponds with the breeding season of their persecutors, the gannets, or solan geese, which prey principally on them. These birds may be then seen congregated *en masse* on their great citadels, the Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth, and the Ailsa Crag at the mouth of the Clyde, performing the process of incubation and feeding their young. As soon as they are emancipated from these duties, and are again on the wing, the herrings re-appear in their neighbourhood, and draw them gradually from their sequestered retreats to the frequented and busy coasts of the Channel.

Ullapool, the victim of herring caprice, has not been altogether deserted by the fish. The day of my visit happened to be one of the few lucky days which revive the dormant spirit of the impoverished inhabitants. The rumour of the approach of a numerous shoal, which now seldom murmurs along the silent banks of the lake, had drawn forth all the boats, and they were returning well laden with their spoils. I shared in the good fortune of the fishermen, for, save for their seasonable provision, I must have contented myself again with a dinner of vegetables; for my hostess having expressed her regret that she had no meat, returned with a different report, and promised me some excellent mutton, which had been kept the proper time; and at length she placed on the table a dish of hashed mutton, well steeped in sauce, the meaning of which I knew well from former experience,—that the meat was too tough for mastication; and such proved to be the fact. She was compelled to acknowledge that the old meat had been too long kept, and that a sheep had been actually killed and dressed for my dinner since my arrival.

The inn-keeper furnished me with a guide, and three stout ponies from Dingwall. Coasting Loch Broom, and ascending a valley watered by a river, and adorned with rich wood, we reached the little inn of Vasacrinach. The landlord supplied me with a real treat: some musty wheat bread, the luxury of which no Englishman can appreciate, who has not fared for a fortnight on oat-cake and barley-scones.

The whole road was very rough, and intercepted by innumerable torrents, some of which formed very fine cataracts. But there was no time for admiring them; speed being the order of the day, as the rain fell in torrents, and every hour increased the water: our horses, indeed, already kept their footing with difficulty at the fords, and the guide doubted the practicability of passing some streams before us. To retreat would be probably under such circumstances as difficult as to advance; and detention in a desert without shelter, would be no pleasant alternative. A succession of high heathery mountains, and broad straths, down which rolled streams now rapidly swelling into rivers, formed the unvaried features of the surrounding scenery. We paused

* For difference between the pilchard and herring, see *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. III., p. 217. There is another mode of distinguishing the pilchard from the herring, resorted to in the West of England, by placing the fish in the frying-pan. The herring is said to be never fat enough to fry itself; whilst half a dozen pilchards, in their best state, would amply supply a frying-pan with fat. But this result arises, perhaps, from the different period at which the herrings and pilchards visit that part of the coast; the pilchards in their fat, the herrings in their lean, season.

only to bait and rest the horses. We ascended at length to an open country, forming part of a broad buttress of Ben Wyvis, which was once supposed to dispute the palm of pre-eminence with Ben Nevis, but is, in fact, lower by several hundred feet. The evening fortunately brightened; and the setting sun lightened with its parting rays the massy ridges which form the western rampart of this mountain, a vast round pile, concealing its summit from our view.

The clouds, gradually scattered by a strong breeze, uncovered a boundless and confused heap of shapeless hills, dreary and inhospitable as "the waste dominions of the dead." The stamp of our horses' feet raised a stately stag: the "antler'd monarch" of the wilderness, who appeared little alarmed at our approach, stood gazing on us for some time, at a short distance, and then walked slowly away. The last few miles carried us through a series of wooded valleys. Our ponies trotted into Dingwall, after a rapid and rough journey of fifty miles, apparently as fresh as when they started.

DINGWALL; CROMARTY BAY; RIVER CONAN; SALMON FISHERY.

DINGWALL may be considered the Roehampton of the Highlands, so thickly is its pleasant neighbourhood studded with gentlemen's seats, the residences of main-land and island lairds, chiefly Mackenzies. Among these, Brahan Castle, on the confluence of the rivers Oran and Conan, the seat of the Seaforth, is perhaps pre-eminent in the beauty of its situation. In the comfort and luxury of these mansions, the tourist speedily forgets his toils and soakings, and may recruit his strength for fresh excursions.

Cromarty Bay, at the head of which Dingwall is situated, the only harbour on the east coast of Scotland accessible at low water to large vessels, is guarded by two round promontories called the Sutors. The war-prices of corn have brought the neighbouring districts into rich culture.

The river Conan, which flows into the Firth at Dingwall, from which Mrs. Hay Mackenzie derived formerly a rent of £700 a year, was once celebrated for the abundance of salmon, previous, it is said, to the use of the stake-nets in the Firth, to which the exclusion of the fish from the upper part of the river is attributed; but these instruments, if used under proper regulations, have not been found to produce such effects. The importance of the salmon-fishery is not sufficiently appreciated by the public, and the fact of the rapid disappearance of the fish, in many places in which it formerly afforded an ample profit, is regarded with too much indifference.

Salmon abounds naturally in all the rivers, estuaries, and coasts of the British Isles, affording an article of subsistence, as well as of luxury, to all classes of people; and its preservation has been made the subject of numerous statutes, regulating the conflicting interests of different proprietors. The objects of legislation on the subject should be twofold:—to afford such protection to the fish as may secure the most constant and abundant supply in all parts of the kingdom, and to prevent mutual interference of allowed rights. Differences of opinion are entertained by the best informed persons as to the natural history of the salmon, and the times proper for permitting and prohibiting the fishing. But there are certain undisputed facts, which might form the basis of laws; viz., that the salmon ascend the rivers for the purpose of spawning; that they return to the sea after depositing their spawn; that they are then a foul state, unfit for food; that the young fry evolve in the Spring of the year from the ova deposited, and that they also descend to the sea. That impediments, preventing the periodical ascent of the fish to the upper part of the rivers, for the purpose of spawning, and their descent as kelts, or new-spawned fish, or young fry, returning to the sea, ought to be prohibited, as interfering with the continuance of the species. Hence the *close* or *fence* season, during which the fishing is rendered illegal, differing according to the different times at which the fish enter and quit the rivers, varying, as it has been ascertained, according to local circumstances. But this difference of regulation renders it extremely difficult to prevent the illegal catching of salmon, as the sale becomes legal as soon as a single river is open; it being impossible to ascertain from what river the salmon offered in the market has been taken. That the law on this subject may be at once simple and valid, it ought to be uniform; and would be so, if it depended on the spawning-season of the

salmon, which has been proved, by the concurrent testimony of all the witnesses examined by the Committee of the House of Commons, to be the same in all the rivers.

"They all agree," says the able writer of a pamphlet, published in 1827, entitled an "Inquiry into the present state and means of Improving the Salmon-Fisheries, &c." "in fixing one and the same time for the descent of the fry; a circumstance which goes far to show that the deposition of the *ova* must also be nearly about the same season everywhere.

"2ndly. The witnesses often confound the ascent of the clean fish in the Spring with that of the spawners, and speak of an *early* river as if they meant early in spawning, while they mean only that the clean fish may be found in it sooner than other rivers."

Now the *fence-months*, as established by law in the different rivers of the kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, vary, according to the minutes of evidence given by the same Author, between the 12th of August and the 23rd of December, for the commencement, and the 30th of November and the 15th of May, for the close; a difference manifestly groundless and absurd. The consequences are most pernicious: the nets are set in many rivers even before the fish have spawned; the kelts, or newly-spawned fish, though unfit for food, are also taken, and the small fry are destroyed by the dragging of the nets, which are of the seine or coble kind, over the bed of the river. The cruive, another instrument for taking the fish, though by Act of Parliament its wires should be so far apart (three inches being the prescribed interval,) as to allow the passage of fish of seven pounds in weight, is fashioned by the cupidity of the proprietor, and catches breeders indiscriminately with other fish. It is, however, less objectionable than the coble-net, not being injurious to the young fry. The pretexts used for these various methods of exterminating the race, is the appearance of the *early* fish in the rivers. The ascent of the salmon is influenced by various causes: the comparative coolness of the river, and the attacks of an insect called the sea-louse, from which the fresh water rids them; but, for the purpose of spawning, it occurs generally in September and October, and they deposit their spawn in November, December, January, and February.

Now the Author of the "Inquiry" remarks, with reference to the *early* fish, that they would remain in the upper pools of the rivers till the fishing season commenced, if it were deferred to a later period, as they would be detained in them by the causes which originally determined their ascent, and thus become the sure prize of the proprietors of the upper fishery; but immediate profit, resulting from the high prices paid for the first-caught salmon in the beginning of the Spring, in London, and other places, affords a strong temptation to the premature and destructive fishery which the Legislature unfortunately sanctions.

The interest of the proprietors, in regard to increasing the quantity of fish sent to market, is at issue with that of the public, because, as the price varies in an inverse ratio to the quantity offered for sale, an equal sum may be got in exchange for a small quantity. A society was formed in London some years ago, during a scarcity, for the relief of the distressed manufacturers and other poor of the metropolis. In the course of their inquiries, they ascertained that the masters of the vessels which conveyed the mackerel to London from the coasts, were accustomed to cast into the river a large part of their cargoes, for the purpose of enhancing the price of the remaining quantity. They offered to purchase the fish which would have been so disposed of; and, by selling them at reduced prices, lowered materially the price of butchers' meat in the London market in a few days.

The Author of the "Inquiry" proposes that the fence-season should extend from the commencement of September to the middle of April, during which period the sale or possession of fish ought to be made illegal. The same writer is a strenuous advocate for the use of the stake-net, which he thus describes:—

"The stake-net consists of netting extended upon upright stakes, fixed in the beach or sand-banks, which are left uncovered when the tide ebbs. These stakes run in a line nearly at right angles with the current of the tide, extending from high-water mark to low-water mark. They are placed at two or three yards distance from each other, or at such other distances as the fishermen find necessary for strength. The netting is stretched tight along the stakes, from the ground up to the full height to which the

tide rises: the meshes of the net are very large, generally three inches from knot to knot, or twelve inches in circumference, and they are always open. There is thus, as it were, a hedge or fence constructed, sufficient to intercept the salmon, but through which the water and all the small fish pass freely.

"When salmon, running with the tide, come against a stake-net, they swim along the side, seeking an opening through which to pass. To receive them when thus swimming along, an entrance is formed, which leads into a chamber or labyrinth, constructed also by netting, stretched on upright stakes. Into this labyrinth the fish pass freely with the tide; but, from its construction, it is hardly possible for them to find their way out: thus they are detained until the tide retires, when they are taken by the fishermen. These chambers have their openings or entrances so placed as to receive the fish going upwards with the flood-tide, or those going downwards with the ebb, according as the *set* of the tide on the coast happens to lead the fish on the station, in the ebb or in the flood. Frequently there are more chambers than one; and when it is suitable, there are chambers both for the ebb and the flood in the same net."

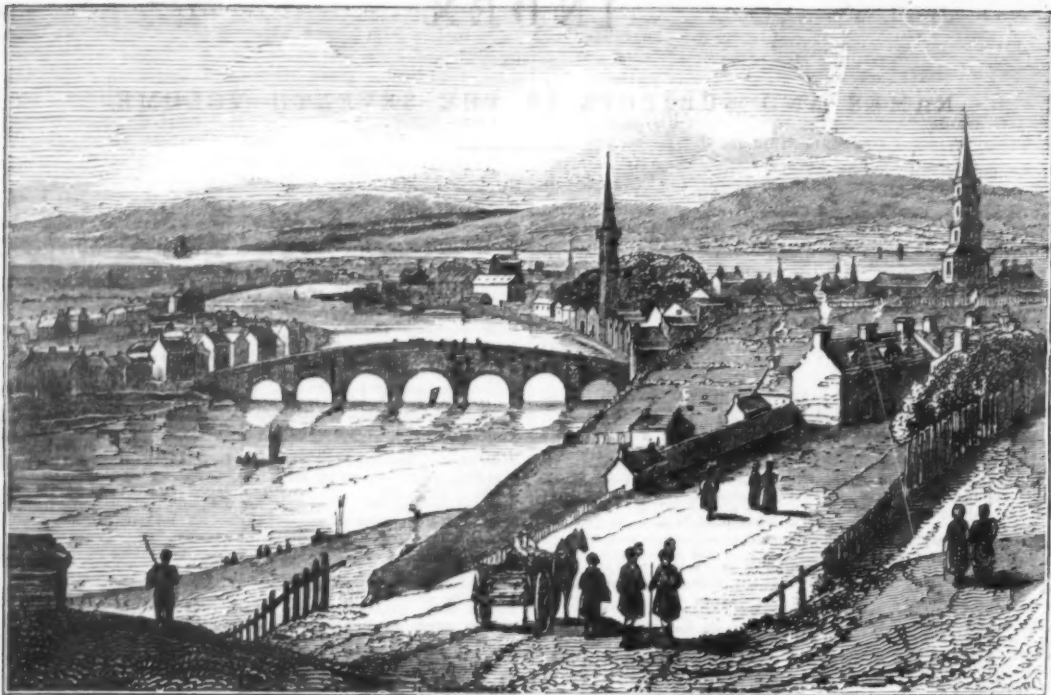
The situation in which the stake-nets are used, is in the estuaries and entrances of rivers. Extending never beyond low-water mark, they do not interrupt the navigation; nor do they intercept the kelts and young fry in their descent to the sea; as the former being exhausted, and the latter weak, and unable to struggle with the eddies in the sides of the river, they suffer themselves to be carried down the mid-channel by the main stream. The stake-net is still prohibited by the laws of the old Parliament of Scotland, which have been recently interpreted according to their strict letter by the Court of Session*. It is allowed in England. The reason, no doubt, for these laws was the design of protecting the salmon; but the evidence adduced before the Committee of the House of Commons proves, that the stake-nets used in the entrances of some of the Scotch rivers did not diminish the quantity taken in the upper part of the same rivers. These instruments, subject to the limitation in regard to the low-water mark, and also to the restriction respecting the close season, would allow sufficient space for the ingress and egress of the fish, and would only add materially to the whole quantity taken. The race would be multiplied by the protection afforded by the extension of the close season; and the stake-net fishery would secure to the public the fish which would otherwise become the prey of the seals and grampusses, which feed principally on salmon. The Legislature ought to be guided, not by the voice of the proprietors of the upper fisheries, who are naturally interested in the monopoly of the market, but by a regard to the public good. The increase of the salmon taken in the Tay, and other rivers in which the stake-net was introduced, was enormous: it might, therefore, be rendered available, in consequence of the great increase in the facilities of conveyance to the different parts of the kingdom, as an article of food for the community, instead of being merely, as at present, an object of luxury for the rich.

At Dingwall there is an Episcopalian Chapel, where I had the opportunity of attending Divine Service on Sunday. The congregation consisted chiefly of the upper classes. The minister preaches in the Gaelic language to several congregations on the hills beyond Inverness, and repairs occasionally to Dingwall. His laborious attention to his duties is ill remunerated. The Episcopalians are numerous in the neighbourhood of Dingwall. In the town is an obelisk erected to the memory of John, Earl of Cromarty, for the purpose, it is alleged, of preventing his enemies executing their threat of dancing over his grave. The title was forfeited in the rebellion of 1715. The residence of the family was Castle Leod, now the property of Mr. Hay Mackenzie, a fine old square tower near Dingwall, standing at the extremity of an avenue of tall and spreading timber-trees. Near this spot resides Sir George Mackenzie, well known for his travels in Iceland.

BEAULEY; CASTLE DOWNIE; LOCH-NESS; FALL OF FOYERS; INVERNESS.

On the side of the road to Beauley are two upright stones, which, according to the prediction of the same wizard who denounced the Seaforth line, will be one day stained with

* The Lord Chancellor has ratified the decision of the Court of Session.



VIEW OF INVERNESS.

the blood of the last of the Mackenzies. The seer expiated the crime of intercourse with the infernal agent at the stake, during the last century. Beauley stands at the upper part of the Murray Firth. The Cathedral of Beauley is a roofless building, of inconsiderable size, used as the burial-place of the neighbouring families, whose tombs are half-buried by grass.

On a high bank near Beauley, at the foot of which rolls the river in an extensive valley, surrounded by high hills, stands Beaufort Castle, the residence of Mr. Fraser of Lovat, who succeeded to the possession of it on the death of the late proprietor, a younger son of the notorious Lovat, by whom the title was forfeited, the present proprietor tracing his descent to the fifth lord. The principal seat of the rebel lord was Lovat, but he resided also here, at the old castle called Downie, which was destroyed after the battle of Culloden by the Duke of Cumberland, and of which a part of the wall, now covered with brushwood, remains, near the present mansion. Lord Lovat beheld its fall from a neighbouring hill. His greyhounds, four guns composed of brass and silver, by which it was defended, are preserved in the Tower of London. A shot lately found, was identified by Mr. Fraser's old piper, as having been discharged from one of them. The present mansion, which is small, and was never intended as the residence of the family, was built by Lord Lovat's factor when the old castle was destroyed; and he was allowed by government a sum to defray the expense. He was taken in this neighbourhood, after the battle of Culloden, by President Forbes, escaped from his imprisonment in the town of Inverness, and fled to his property of Morar, opposite Sky, where he was found, wrapped up in a blanket, in a hollow tree. So great was his vanity, that he wrote his own epitaph long before his last troubles, panegyricising his own vile character most unscrupulously. His eldest son, the master of Lovat, quite a boy, who had been urged to share in the rebellion by his father, who meanwhile professed to disclaim him for his conduct as undutiful and disloyal, commanded his clan, Fraser, under the banner of the Pretender. The son was involved in the proscription with his father; but afterwards, in consideration of his youth, and the tyranny and treachery by which his father had hurried him into rebellion, received his pardon, and subsequently recovered his estates. He did not belie the confidence reposed in him. He had raised a regiment amongst his clansmen for the service of the king,

before his property was restored; and afterwards added two others, and rose to the rank of general officer. The generosity evinced towards a chief who had appeared in arms against his sovereign, was justified and rewarded by the enthusiastic gratitude and devoted loyalty of himself and of his clansmen, and contributed to enthrone the present royal family in the affections of the most devoted adherent of the exiled line. The General was succeeded in the possession of his estates by his brother, whose eccentricities acquired for him a degree of notoriety scarcely surpassed by that which crimes had won for his guilty sire.

The glens from which the river Beauley descends, the property partly of Lovat and partly of Chisholm, are beautifully variegated with rock and wood: and the Falls of Kilmorach, though in height but a salmon-leap, form a striking feature in the landscape, where the river bursts from a narrow pass. A dreary moor divides these glens from Loch-Ness. The principal object on the north side of this celebrated lake is the huge round summit of Meal-fourvouny. On the south are several glens, bold, craggy, and richly wooded. One of these is the bed of a mountain-torrent, which, pursuing its course in cataracts, at length rushes through a rocky channel not exceeding three feet in breadth; and then bursting forth as from a spout, falls on a slightly projecting ledge seven feet below, and thence 180 feet into a deep pool, whose dark waters reflect the gloom cast upon them by high impending rocks and overshadowing trees, needing not the adventitious aid of the clouds and heavy showers which were now passing—

..... To sadden all the scene,
Shade every flower, and darken every green,
Deepen the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathe a browner horror on the woods.

The Fall of Foyers, of which I have attempted an exact description, is pre-eminent in grandeur among the Scottish cataracts, which seldom deserve their reputation.

A pleasant ride along the shore of the lake leads to Inverness, the capital of the Highlands: and here I must leave my reader in the hands of less eager travellers, content if I have in any degree imparted to others the pleasure which it has afforded to myself, to retrace my steps over regions abounding in real and romantic interest, and to revive the grateful remembrance of cordial and disinterested hospitality.

P. S. Q. R.

END OF THE SEVENTH VOLUME

INDEX

TO THE

NAMES AND SUBJECTS IN THE SEVENTH VOLUME.

ASNEY of Glastonbury, 139, 159
Addison, selections from, 4, 23
Air, Earth, and Water, 222
Alderney Cow, account of, 47
Allahabad, in India, 10
America, North, junction of the Mississippi and Missouri, 108
Animals, Cruelty to, 68
Animals and animal products used as food by man, 207
Ant, Lion, 118
Ants, their mode of communication, 228
Aphorisms, 31, 32, 158, 228
Arabian Tale, 147
Arabic, translations from the, by W. K., 135, 231
Arno and its Bridges, the, 186
Arts, Useful, described, 15, 23, 28, 63, 95, 119, 149, 164, 192, 207, 223
Associates, cautions respecting, 239
Assynt, 252
Atheism, folly of, exemplified, 231
Aurora Borealis, stanzas on the, by R. C. P., 231
Aurora Evening, the, 147
Bacon, Lord, extract from, 155
Banbat Caterpillar, mode of forming its nest, 13
Bangor Cathedral, North Wales, 76
Baxter, anecdote of, 94
Beetle, sacred, of the Egyptians, 68
 —the, and the Horses of the Pasha, a Fable, 91
Bell, Song of the, 233
Bell-Bird, account of the, 200
Berlin, some account of, 129—capture by the French, 123—the river Spree, and its bridges, 123—its gates, streets, and houses, 124—the royal palace, churches, and other public buildings, 123, 126—manufactures and commerce, 127
Bernard, St., a precept of, 53
Beveridge, extract from, 228
Bible, English, first translation of, 169
 —Society, the French and Foreign, 227
Biography, advantages of, 143
Birds clustering for warmth, 151
 —Flight of, 134
 —of Prey, defect of smell in, 72
Blood, Circulation of, in Man, 27
Bones of Animals tinged by feeding on colouring substances, 54
Bouquetin, or Ibex, 243
Brahmines Bulls, 136
Bridge at Fribourg, 215
 —Menai, 212
 —Rope, 210
 —Hammersmith, 214
Bridgewater Treatise, extracts from, 198, 227, 238, 240
Brighton, the Suspension-Pier at, 213
Brook, swift, lines on, a, 67
Brownlee, W. H., lines by, 149
Bruges, city of, 114
Brussels, some account of the city of, 34—situation and climate, 34—streets, squares, and palaces, 35—senate-house, town-hall, and palace of the Fine Arts, 36—Botanic Garden, church of St. Gudule, and cemeteries, 37—environs, Waterloo, &c., 38
Buer, extract from, 231
Buffalo and Lion, 144
Burke, selections from, 167, 190
Busby, Dr., anecdote of, 75
Business, necessity of attention to, 51
Butler, Bishop, on false reasoning, 118
Carrington, lines by, 27, 60
Cathedral of Hangor, 76
 —of Norwich, 202
Cave of Smo, 175
Ceylon Deer, an account of, 228
Chalmers, Dr., on the insignificance of this world, 53
Character, decision of, in Mrs. Hannah More, 71
Charitable judgment recommended, 23
Charity and self-denial, 47
Charlotte, Princess, 194
Cheerfulness, a necessary part of religion, 77
Cheese, how made, 244
Cherokee Indians, the tutors of West, 102
Chigga of the West Indies, 44
Children, yearly meeting of, in St. Paul's Cathedral, 159

Children, motive of a sceptic in educating them religiously, 219
 —Plato's remark on, 228
China and Japan, Paper Mulberry-tree of, 52
 —its People and Productions, I., 74
Chinese, Manners and Customs of, II., 138
 —Letter-writing, specimen of, 14
 —mode of manufacturing Porcelain, 204
Chocolate, 164
Christian belief an incentive to gratitude, 53
Christianity, how it may be manifested, 227
Chrysostom, a saying of, 195
Church of Scotland, discipline of, 170
Churn, construction and uses of, 224
Cicero, a precept of, 110
Cider and Perry, how made, 120
Clarke, Samuel, anecdote of, 67
Cleanliness next to Godliness, 239
Cloud, Sonnet to the, 116
Cocoa-nut, ceremony of throwing, at Bombay, 67
Coffee and Chocolate, 164
Coleridge, selections from, 96, 107, 118, 138—Bishop, extract from, 239
Combs, selections from, 102, 151
Comet, lines on the, 149
 —Halley's, 180
 —lines on the, by R. C. P., 195
Common Sense, value of, 3
Compassion and forbearance, 23
Contentment, 4
Cooking, modes of, 192
Cordova, Cathedral or Mosque of, 26
Cork, and the Cork-tree, 17
Corn, mode of preserving in Morocco, 62
Cornaro, Ludovico, notice of, 19
Cornwall, the Logan-Rock, in, 183
Coverdale, Myles, specimen of his translation of the Bible, 110
 —Bishop of Exeter, 227
 —Memoir of, 190
Courage and Wisdom, Bishop Hall, on, 99
Cows of Alderney and Guernsey, 47, 48
Creative Power, operations of, 192
Criminal Laws of China, 74
Crocker, Lines by, 218
Cromarty Bay, 254
Cruelty to Animals, remarks on, 68
D'Aguesseau, anecdote of, 133
Daily events, remark on, 240
Danby, selections from, 71, 77, 110, 118, 143, 158, 203
Date Palm-tree, account of, 93
Dead, Love for the, 199
Death, the Palace of, a Fable, 231
Degeneracy of the human race, remark on, by Hodgkin, 113
Desire of a wise man, 32
Devizes, Market-Cross of, 60
Diamonds, natural history of, 20—the largest known, 21
Dingwall, 254
Distilling, different modes of, 149
Distress, account of, 175
Doane, Stanzas by, 207
Dog, sagacity of, 240
Dogs and Cats, their dispositions, 228
Domestic Worship, prevalence of, in Scotland, 250
Drew, extracts from, 19, 51
Drunkennes, on the effects of, 200
Duncanby Stocks, Calithness, 87
Dunrobin Castle, account of, 172
Dutch Farmers at the Cape of Good Hope, 240
Dying Words of a Christian, 239
Eagle and her young, flight of the, 183
Eastern story of Obidah and the Hermit, 168
East India Stations, VI., Allahabad, 10—VII., Calcutta, 103
Education, causes and effects of, 196
Education, National, 78
Egypt, Mohammed Ali, Pacha of, 130
Egyptian Pottery, 204
Egyptians, sacred Beetle of the, 68
Electricity, 231
Electro-Magnet, account of the, 232
Elizabeth, Queen, 247
Eminent Persons, deaths of 23
Enjoyment, real, in the company of the good, 53

Erasmus, biographical sketch of, 146
Eternity, wisdom of preparing for, 118
Evening Hours, the, 64
 —the Autumn, 147
Exercise, best time for taking, 111
 —of the Lungs, 206
Exercise, different kinds of, 141
Exeter, Miles Coverdale, Bishop of, 190
Expectation and enjoyment, 236
Experimental Science, Familiar Illustrations of, IX., 196
Fables—the Ocean and the Rivers, 13; the Bees and the Horses of the Pasha, 91; the Palace of Death, 231
Familiar Illustrations of Natural Phenomena, XV., 22
Field Flowers, poetical address to, 44
Fire-flies, magical beauty of, 167
Flight of Birds, 134
 —of Insects, 166
 —of the Eagle and her young, 183
Florence, the Arno and its Bridges, in, 186
Fly in Turnips, 181
Forest Trees, 3
Fox, John, gentle rebuke by, 53
French Fleet, dispersion of the, on the attempted invasion of Ireland, 163
Fribourg, in Switzerland, the Suspension-Bridge, at, 215
Funeral at Sea, the, 152
Fungi and Mosses, 188
Galvanism, 231
Generosity and Prudence, 240
George I., correspondence of, with Danish Missionaries, 70
Germany, account of Wurzburg, in, 66
Ghazepore, 103
Gigantic Salamander, 112
Glastonbury, the Abbey of, I., 130—II., 139
Glauber's Salt, mode of preparation, 227
God, Justice of, 23
Good-Breeding, the art of, 209
Good Example, its beneficial tendency, 30
Goodness and Slander, 32
Grammar Schools in England, 236
Great Numbers, III., Numbers descriptive of Motion, 61
Great Bird of Paradise, 55
Greek Islands, I., Rhodes, 49—II., Patmos, 178
Gymnastics, beneficial tendency of, 95
Hacho, king of Lapland, story of, 159
Hall, Bishop, selections from, 14, 31, 77, 93, 99, 189
 —Capt. Basil, selections from, 67, 71
 —Robert, extract from, 112
Halley's Comet, 180
Hamburg, City of, 50
Hammersmith Suspension-Bridge, 214
Hand, the Human, its structure and uses, 199
Harvest in Nassau, 20
Haydn, anecdote of, in childhood, 51
Health, how undermined, 240
 —and Disease, remarks on, 102
Heat, the properties of, 196
Hellston School, Cornwall, 237
Hemans, Mrs., Sabbath Sonnet by, 44
Hemlock, the different species of, 296
Hempriggs Castle, account of, 171
Herring Fishery, Scottish, account of, 170, 174, 252
Herrings, migrations of, 253
Highland, Costume, remark on, 251
Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Sketches of the, 82, 170, 250
Himala Mountains, 210
Hodgkin, Dr., on Malt-liquors, 165
 —Dr., on the Human Race, 112
 —on Drunkenness, 200
Hone, Rev. R. H., on the advantages of Biography, 143
Honesty, or Lunaria, account of, 45
Horne, Bishop, on the Psalms, 203
Hot-baths, hot-beds, and conservatories, 63
Honey-Fly, the, 148
Hoy, Old Man of, 82
Human Hand, the, 198
Hunting the Leopard, mode of, 106
Ibex, or Bouquetin, 243
Icon Basilike, extracts from, 116, 117, 203
Immoderate desires, remark on, by Dr. Johnson, 102

India, Scenes in, 135
Indigo, Culture and Manufacture of, 7
Industry, the means of acquiring Wealth, 200
Ions, I., Spanish Inns, 58
Insect sagacity, instance of, 13
Insects, remarks on the study of, 107
 —on the flight of, 166
 —that fly into the human eye, 234
Insignificance of this World, 53
Instinct of the Redbreast, 51
Intellect expanded by faith, 118
Inverness, 256
Ireland, attempted Invasion of, 165
Irving, W., on Forest Trees, 9
 —on Love for the Dead, 199
Ivy, its uses to the Insect tribe, 70
Jesse, extracts from, 94, 151, 240
Johnson, Dr., selections from, 14, 71, 77, 102, 116, 118, 200
Jugglers, Indian, 135
July, an Evening in, 5
Justice of God, 23
Kelp, manufacture of, in the Orkneys, 85
Kirchner, anecdote of, 221
Knowledge unprofitably sought, 77
 —the acquisition of, 182
 —the result of study, 193
La Bruyere, extract from, 157
Labour and Capital, 246
Lapland, story of Hacho, king of, 159
Lavater on affection, 226—a maxim of, 197
Learning, advantages of, 155
Leopard-hunting in the East Indies, 106
Letter writing, Chinese, specimen of, 14
Life, sea of, the adventurer on, 60
Light, effect of the presence or absence of, 203
 —and its influence on animal and vegetable nature, 239
Lightning, effects of, on Oaks, 156
Lion-Ant, the, 118
Lion and Buffalo Fight, 144
Local Attachments, 19
Loch Scourie, 251
Lochs Ischard and Laxford, 175
Logan-Rock, the, in Cornwall, 183
Long Life, universal desire for, 14
Lord, Dr., on the organ of Touch, 54
Love for the Dead, by Washington Irving, 199
Lucerne, Town of, in Switzerland, 98
Lunaria, or Honesty, account of, 45
Lunga, exercise of the, 206
Lyte, Rev. H. F., lines by, 64
Mackerel Fishery, 60
Magnetism, 231
Malt Liquors, Dr. Hodgkin's remarks on, 165
Man, adaptation of his faculties to the capabilities of inanimate nature, 18
Manners and Customs of the Turks, I., a Turkish Festival, 90
 —of the Chinese, 74, 138
 —change of, in the Highlands, 251
Mant, Bishop, selections from, 23, 179, 195, 208, 227
Market-Cross at Devizes, 60
Material Nature, the study of, 3
Mathematician, a self-taught, 14
Maxim, a sound one, 195
Melancthon, the Reformer, Biographical notice of, 92
Menai Bridge, 212
Mental Pleasures, 110
Microscopic Vegetation, 188
Military Station of the Chinese, 183
Milk, its properties and uses, 223, 244
Misery, how converted into happiness, 79
Missionaries in India, Correspondence of, with George I., 70
Missouri River, description of the, 107
Mohammed Ali, Pacha of Egypt, 130
Monkey and Crow, the, 152
Montgomery, lines by, 18, 55
Moon, Lines on the Rising, 184
More, Mrs. Hannah, selections from, 30, 47, 71, 155
Mornay, Philip de, sayings of, 149, 167
Mosque, or Cathedral, of Cordova, in Spain, 26
Motion, Great Numbers, descriptive of, 61

Monetta, valley of the, in Switzerland, 154
 Mozart, his opinion of Haydn, 75
 Mulberry Tree, Paper, 52
 Munich, Great Square in the City of, 2
 Nassau, Harvesting in, 30
 National Education, 78
 — Statues, No. VII., Sir Isaac Newton, 242
 Natural Phenomena, Familiar Illustrations of, XV.; Water in a state of Vapour, 23
 Nature, the hand and instrument of God, 31
 — Contemplation of, its pleasantness, 71
 Naturalist's, the, Summer Evening Walk, 19
 Neuchatel, in Switzerland, 218
 Newton, Sir Isaac, memoir of 242
 — his mildness of temper, 75
 New Year's Eve, lines on, 248
 Nightingale, song of, remarks on, 59
 Nightshade, various species of, 4
 Norwich Cathedral, description of, 202
 Oaks, extraneous bodies discovered in, 156
 Obidah and the Hermit, 169
 Ocean and the Rivers—a Fable, 13
 Oddities of Genius, 183
 Old Man of Hoy, 82
 Olive Oil, its manufacture, 24
 Opium-eaters, an account of, 220
 Organs of Sense, I., Touch, 54
 Orkney, State of Education and Religion in, 82
 Ourang Outang, account of, 100
 Ox and Cow, the various species of, 223
 Ox and Sheep, uses of the, 207
 Oyster Banks, 34
 Palace of Death, the—a Fable, 231
 Paper Mulberry-tree, 52
 Paradise, Great Bird of, 55
 Past and future, symbols of, 107
 Patmos, Island of, 178
 Peasant's Home, the, 27
 Perry, 120
 Perseverance, necessity of, 117
 — remarks of Baron de Grimm on, 239
 Pickles, Plants used for, 29
 Piety and knowledge—Boyle, 110
 — the only solace of the aged, 71
 Plants and Herbs used for Seasoning, 38
 Plato's remark on Children, 228
 Poisonous Vegetables, 226

Poppy, the White, 220
 Potato, prejudice against the, 147
 Pottery and Porcelain, on the manufacture of ancient, 204
 Princess Charlotte of Wales, Memoir of, 194
 Private Life, extract from, 151
 Presence of Mind, effect of, 79
 Profane swearing, folly of, 93
 Proverbs, VI., 6—VII., 80—VIII., 116
 Prudence, remark on, 199
 Psalms, Horse on the, 203
 Pulex penetrans, or Chigga, 44
 Queen Elizabeth, 247
 Quercus suber, or Cork-tree, 17
 Rebuke, a gentle, 53
 Reliance upon Providence, 159, 239
 Religion the best consolation in misfortune, 30
 — the pleasures derived from, by Lavater, 227
 — no regular and supported conduct without the aid of, 221
 Religious Knowledge, its importance as a part of education, 117
 Retzsch, (Moritz.) his Illustrations of the Song of the Bell, 232
 Rhodes, account of the Island of, 42
 Riches and Poverty—Calmet, 148
 Rising Moon, lines on the, 184
 Robertson, Dr., on the Circulation of the Blood, 27
 Rooks, remarks on, 31
 Rope-Bridge in Tibet, 210
 Rose-gardens of Ghazepore, 103
 Rowe, extract from, 187
 Sabbath Sonnet, by Mrs. Hemans, 44
 — observance of the, in Scotland, 250
 Salamander, Gigantic, 112
 Sal Ammoniac, the manufacture of, 227
 Salmon Fishery in the River Conan, 254
 Salt, the uses and properties of, 208
 — peculiar process of obtaining, at Guisane, 232
 Scepticism, Bishop Mant on, 208
 Scotland, Sketches of the Highlands and Islands of, 82, 170, 230
 Scriptures, presumption of objecting against, 118
 Scudery on complaisance, 195
 Seal Fishery on the Skerries, 174
 Seasons, remarks on the choice of, 31
 Sea-weed, nature and uses of, 132
 Sharpe, extract from, 142
 Shawl-Goat of Tibet, 31
 Sheep and Ox, uses of the, 207

Silence, Sonnet on, 163
 Sinclair and Girnego, Castles of, 89
 Sineaton, the engineer, anecdote of, 148
 Smo, Cave of, 175
 Song of the Nightingale, 59
 — of the Bell, 234
 Sonnets—by G. M. J., 116
 South, extract from, 158
 Southey, extracts from, 3, 151
 Spanish Inns, description of, 58
 Spices and other Condiments, 23
 Spirituous Liquors, the pernicious effects of, 222
 Staubbach, the Fall of the, 163
 Steam-engine, the properties of the, 197
 Stone, Edmund, a self-taught Mathematician, 14
 St. Paul's Cathedral, yearly meeting of the Children in, 158
 Strenesse, Count, memoir of, 224
 Study of Insects, remarks on, 107
 Sugar, its growth and manufacture, 29
 Sumach, or Rhus coriaria, 13
 Sun, Sonnet to the, 116
 Sunday-travelling, Scottish antipathy to, 175, 176
 Sunday, lines on, 240
 Suspension-bridges, 210
 Sussex, Wingfield Castle, in, 63
 Sutherlandshire, account of, 171
 Swearing, Folly of, 93
 Swift, Dean, selections from, 91, 158, 195, 228
 Switzerland, town of Lucerne, in, 98
 — Valley of the Monetta, 154
 — Fall of the Staubbach, 162
 — Town of Neuchatel, 218
 Talents, remark on their abuse, 77
 Talkers, Great, 199
 Talmud, quotation from, 24
 Taylor, Jeremy, extract from, 23
 Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate, 164
 Telford, Mr., his bridge across the Menai Straits, 212
 Temperance of Cornaro, 19
 Thelwall, anecdote of, 130
 Thomas à Kempis, saying of, 203
 Tibet, Shawl-Goat of, 31
 — Suspension-bridge in, 210
 Time, on the misuse of, 4
 — improvement of, 110
 — remarks on, 133
 Trade Winds, the, 130
 Trees, Fruits, and Flowers, remarks on, 167
 Tubercle, singular property of, 107
 Turbulence and hurry often a cover for idleness, 53
 Turkish festival, description of, 90

Turner, Sharon, extracts from, 3, 23, 90
 Turnips, the fly in, 181
 Ullapool, 252
 Universe not governed by chance, 118
 Unreasonable Rigour deprecated, 163
 Useful Arts, V., Gardening, 15
 — VI., Spices, &c., 23
 — VII., Cruciferous Plants, 28
 — VIII., Herbaceous Plants, &c., 63
 — IX., The Vine, 95
 — X., Wine-making, 119
 — XI., Distilling, 149
 — XII., Tea, Coffee, &c., 164
 — XIII., Cooking, 192
 — XIV., Animals and Animal Products used as Food, 207
 — XV., The Ox and Cow, 223
 — XVI., Cheese, &c., 244
 Vaporisation, causes and effects of, 196
 Vegetables and Salad Herbs, 28
 — uses of, 46
 — poisonous, 226
 Vice, the best restraint from, 77
 Vine, the, how cultivated, 95
 Vinegar, how made, 150
 Vintage, 119
 Virtue, the sole parent of felicity, 14
 — productive of happiness, 47
 Visible Creation, lines on, 18
 Voyage round the World, 55
 Wales, Princess Charlotte of, 194
 Walton, Isaac, extract from, 222
 Water in the state of Vapour, 23
 Water, Air, and Earth, 222
 — uses of, 240
 Waterloo, Battle of, 38
 Weather, the necessity of protection against, 135
 West, Benjamin, anecdote of, 103
 "What is that, Mother?" by Donne, 207
 White, of Selborne, lines by, 12
 — on rocks, 31
 Whiten Head, Loch Eribol, 174
 Wild Beast Fights in India, 143
 Wilmot, Sir Eardley, anecdote of, 131
 Winds, the Trade, 190
 Wines, consumption of, in England, 95
 Wingfield Castle, Sussex, 63
 Winter Robin, lines on, 226
 Wisdom and Knowledge not always companions, 24
 — and goodness of God in the animal Creation, 101
 Witchcraft, belief in, in the Orkneys, 87
 Wurzburg, account of, 66

INDEX TO THE ENGRAVINGS.

Admanthes Unipunctata, 123
 Alderney and other Cows, 48
 Allahabad, Fort at, 9
 Ascolobus, the common, 189
 Bangia Calophylla, 139
 Bangor Cathedral, North Wales, 76
 Beetle, Sacred, of the Egyptians, 68
 Bell-bird, 200
 Berlin, Place des Gendarmes, at, 121
 — Brandenburg Gate, 126
 — Royal Palace, 128
 Botanic Garden, Brussels, 37
 Brahmin Bull, 136
 Bridge over the Monetta, 153
 — Menai, 213
 — Fribourg, 209
 — Rope, 216
 Bruges, view on the Canal at, 113
 Brussels, Town-hall at, 33
 — Botanic Garden at, 37
 — Place Royale at, 40
 Cave of Smo, Sutherlandshire, 176
 Cecithospa, the large shining, 188
 Ceramium Patens, 135
 Ceylon Deer, 228
 Chinese Saloon, at Allahabad, 9
 Chinese Press, 245
 Chigga, or Pulex penetrans, 44
 Chinese Military and Commercial Station, view of, 137
 — Mandarin and Culprit, 73
 Chocolate-tree, 165
 Churns, two kinds of, 224
 Cider-Mill and Press, 120
 Coffee-tree, 164
 Corfova, Cathedral at, 23
 Cork-tree, 17
 Coupling-links and chains used in the Menai Bridge, 212, 213
 Cow:—the Akierny—the Short-horned, or Holderness—the Long-horned, or Lancashire—the Middle-horned, or Lancashire Ox, 48

Cromarty, view of, 253
 Date-Palm, fruit and flowers of the, 20
 — cultivation of the, 96
 Deadly Nightshade, 5
 Devises, Market-Cross at, 60
 Diamond-Cutting and Polishing, 20
 Diamonds, Representations of the largest known, 21
 Dunce'sby Stacks, Calithness, 85
 Dunrobin Castle, Sutherlandshire, 169
 Egyptians, sacred Beetle of the, 68
 Egyptian Pottery, articles of, 205
 Electro-Magnet, 232
 Erasmus, Statue of, at Rotterdam, 145
 Earla, the Least, 189
 Exillaria flabellata, 133
 Fall of the Staubbach, 161
 Fine-leaved Water Hemlock, 225
 Florence, the Arno and its Bridges, 185
 Fribourg, in Switzerland, Suspension-bridge at, 209
 Fungi, various species of, 188, 189
 Galvanic Battery, 231
 Ghazepore, Tomb at, 104
 Gigantic Salamander, 112
 Glastonbury Abbey, St. Joseph's Chapel, at, 140
 — Abbots' Kitchen in, 160
 Great Bird of Paradise, 56
 Hamburg, the Ladies' Walk, at, 49
 Helleson Grammar School, 237
 Hemlock, the common, 225
 Hotel de Ville, Brussels, 33
 House Fly, various species of, 149
 Hoy, Old Man of, Orkney, 81
 Ibez, the, 244
 Indigo Works in South America, 8
 Inverness, view of, 236

Lanet for piercing the Poppy, 220
 Leopard-hunting in the East Indies, 105
 Lion Ant, 118
 Lion and Buffalo Fight, 144
 Loch Seourie, view in, 249
 Logan Stone, Cornwall, 184
 Lucerne, in Switzerland, 97
 Mackerel, the, 69
 — Fishery, 72
 Mandarin, Chinese, Examination of a female Culprit by, 73
 Market-Cross at Devises, 60
 Melancthon, Philip, portrait of, 92
 Menai-frame and Gardening tools, 16
 Menai Suspension-bridge, 213
 Missouri, falling in of the Banks of, 109
 Mohammed Ali, Portrait of, 139
 Monema Dillynii, 133
 Monkey and Crow, 152
 Munich, Great Square at, 1
 Neuchatel, Church of St. Peter, and Landing-place, at, 217
 Newton, Sir Isaac, Statue of, 241
 Nightshade, common Garden, 5
 Norwich Cathedral, 201
 Oak Trees, initials, &c. found in the trunks of, 156, 157
 Olive Oil-mill, 24
 Ourang-Outang, heads of, 100
 — skulls of, 101
 Pacha of Egypt, portrait of, 129
 Paper Mulberry-tree, 52
 Paradise, Great Bird of, 55
 Patmos, the Monastery of St. John, in the island of, 177
 Place Royale, Brussels, 49
 Polyphonia Agariciana, 130
 Poppy, the White, 220
 Portrait of Philip Melancthon, 92
 Pottery, ancient Egyptian, at work, 205

Princess Charlotte, Monument of, 123
 Protococcus nivalis, or Red Snow, 133
 Quercus suber, or Cork-tree, 17
 Rhodes, Tower of St. Nicholas, at, 41
 Rope-bridge across a torrent in the Himala, 216
 Salamander, Gigantic, 112
 Salicabrus Seal, 68
 Sea-weed, various species of, 132, 133
 Seed Receptacles in Mosses, 189
 Shawl-Goat, 82
 Sinclair and Girnego, Castles of, 89
 Smo, Cave of, 176
 Song of the Bell, 233
 Spanish Inn, interior of, 57
 Spharobolus, the Star-like, 188
 Staubbach, Fall of the, 161
 Steam-Engine, cylinder and piston of, 197
 St. George's Chapel, monument of the Princess Charlotte, in, 133
 Stillium, minute parasitic, 189
 Sumach, the, or Rhus coriaria, 12
 Suspension-bridge at Fribourg, 209
 Switzerland, Lucerne, in, 97
 — Bridge over the Monetta, 153
 — Fall of the Staubbach, 161
 — View at Neuchatel, 217
 Sycamore Petiol Penisia, 189
 Tomb at Ghazepore, in India, 104
 Tower of St. Nicholas, at Rhodes, 41
 Turkish Festival, 89
 Turnip-fly and Caterpillar, 181
 Water-Dropwort, 225
 Water-Hemlock, 225
 Whiten Head, Loch Eribol, 173
 Wingfield Castle, Suffolk, 64
 Woolly Nightshade, or Bitter-sweet, 4
 Wurzburg, Germany, Bridge of, 66

ERRATA.

Page 224, col. 1, line 19, for "kept there three," read "kept three," &c.
 — 224, — 2, — 47, for "one pound and a half weekly," read "half a pound weekly."

